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# 'End child marriages'

**FIRM STAND:** Allowing practice will only tarnish country's image, says Jamil Khir

**M**EN below the age of 18 and women under 16 are not allowed to marry unless allowed to by the courts, Umno supreme council member Datuk Seri Jamil Khir Baharom said yesterday.

Responding to queries from Wanita Umno delegates at the end of the wing's debate, he said according to the law, marriages involving underage children could be sanctioned only by the Syariah courts.

"The law also states that such marriages cannot be undertaken by senior religious officers, such as Tok Kadi, or district officers. Only the Syariah court can allow it with the parents' consent."

Jamil Khir said a firm stand must be taken against child marriages as such incidences would only tarnish the image of the country.

Kampar Wanita chief Nolee Ashilin Mohamed Radzi had earlier urged Wanita chief Datuk Seri Shahrizat Abdul Jalil to address the problem as such cases were on the rise and the trend was worrying.

She cited recent statistics from the Malaysian Syariah Judiciary Department showing that the number of child marriages had been on the rise since 2011.

"There were about 900 cases in 2011 and 1,022 last year. Till May this

year, there were 446 cases, a majority of which involved Bumiputeras.

"This issue must be tackled now before it becomes the norm."

Kubang Kerian Wanita chief Datuk Zaleha Husin said it was time for Umno and Pas to hold a *muzakarah* to exchange views to strengthen and reconcile Malays.

"If Pas is serious, the *muzakarah* should be made the main agenda."

Pas president Datuk Seri Abdul Hadi Awang recently renewed interest in talks with Umno in his closing speech at the party's 59th *muktamar* assembly recently.

On a separate issue, Umno Youth called on Putrajaya to review the electricity hike.

In his keynote address at the opening of the wing's assembly, Youth chief Khairy Jamaluddin said the hike appeared to benefit Tenaga Nasional Berhad and was a burden to the young working class.

"As a government-linked company, Tenaga Nasional has to be more concerned for the rakyat."

While debating the motion, Kedah Umno Youth vice-chief Mahathir Hamid said the electricity supply market in the peninsula should be opened to private, gov-

ernment-linked or state-owned companies to prevent a monopoly.

He said more companies in the market would create more competition and competitive prices that would benefit consumers.

"If this cannot be implemented, the government must empower methods to develop the renewable energy sector by giving rebates for the use of solar energy.

"We believe the government can give fair consideration to the proposal, instead of increasing the tariff."

Puteri Umno chief Mas Ermeyati Samsudin also called for a review of the tariff hike.

In her winding-up speech, she said feedback from the people showed they were not happy with the hike.

"I hope the government will consider reviewing the electricity tariff because of its long-term effect on the people," the Masjid Tanah member of Parliament told 973 delegates at the assembly here yesterday.

